

BOOK REVIEWS

LES PYGMÉES DE LA HAUTE SANGHA. MAURICE DJENDA. Geographica, No. 14. Lisbon, 1968. pp. 27-43.

An article by Mr. Djenda, who is himself a member of the Mpyemo tribe, one of the "grands bantous" who live in association with the two pygmy tribes, the Bangombe and the Bambenjele of the Haute Sangha, in the S.W. corner of the Central African Republic near Nola. He gives a general description of these pygmies, with a good map of the distribution of their villages, and then describes their polyphonic yodelling, their most common dances, and their musical instruments. These pygmies, he says, are much in demand among other tribes in the area for playing at their festivities, such as wakes, where their skill on instruments such as *ndumu* (drum), *biyo* (bamboo flute), *ngombi* (mbira) and the harp-zither (no name?) is much admired. He finishes with a brief mention of the secret society Jenge.

The article is accompanied by 18 colour photographs, whose quality almost compensates for the lack of any description or transcription of the music. I hope that Mr. Djenda will enlarge on his excellent observations in some other journal devoted more exclusively to music.

ANDREW TRACEY.

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THE LIFE AND WORK OF BENJAMIN TYAMZASHE, A CONTEMPORARY XHOSA COMPOSER, by DIEDRE D. HANSEN. Occasional paper No. 11, Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa, 1968. Price 50 cents. pp. 33. Six musical illustrations.

This is the digest of a thesis submitted to Rhodes University for the degree of Master of Music, here published in the form of a pamphlet. The title describes the contents accurately: an exhaustively detailed biographical study of the well-known Xhosa composer, and a brief (only five short extracts) analysis of his style in composition, and his development as a composer.

Tyamzashe comes from the now long line of heavily mission-influenced Xhosa composers. One is hard put to it to find much debt to tradition in his music. Miss Hansen seems to fall on the side that what there is is more by default than intent. She takes pains to point out the faults in his writing, from the viewpoint of western classical music, and attributes them to his sketchy formal musical training. In fact she seems to have concentrated on the negative aspects of his work, such as his "improper" use of parallel intervals and of the dominant 7th chord, and his weakness in other departments such as form, counterpoint and harmony. One senses the presence here of a western music student, and one wishes for a little more enthusiasm for the music described, for its acceptance in its own unique terms, not judging it from any other values than those which seem right to the people concerned.

For this reviewer, steeped as he is in prejudice for traditional forms of music, there is in fact only limited interest in Tyamzashe's music, partaking, as it seems to, of the weaknesses of both African and western music. Nevertheless, one can see the continuity of tradition in the function of his songs, many of which were composed for particular occasions, or by special request, and have achieved wide popularity among Xhosa speakers, and beyond. Most of the pamphlet concentrates on the positive aspects of his life and achievements as a prolific, successful and much-loved composer.

ANDREW TRACEY.

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"UN FILM EXPÉRIMENTAL: BATTERIES DOGON, ÉLÉMENTS POUR UNE ÉTUDE DE RYTHMES", L'HOMME. GILBERT ROUGET. Revue Française d'Anthropologie, V-2, 1965.

The film analysed in this article was taken in March, 1964, by Gilbert Rouget, Jean Rouch and Germaine Dieterlen. (16 mm, colour, duration 26 minutes). A new and promising technique of obtaining synchronized shots in the field was employed.

The subject of the film is "phonolithes" (slats of stone) laid across the legs of the musician. The rhythm patterns are the same as those played on slit-drums and membrane-drums.

These "phonolithes" were found underneath an overhanging, narrow rock shelter along the sides of a small valley called Yannay, near Sanga, in Niger. "Normally the young goatherds amuse themselves there . . . teaching one another and rhythmic patterns without any presence and control by adults. These are the only circumstances in which these stones may sound."

"These percussion instruments were filmed in two different ways, at first dissociating the two complementary rhythmic parts, and then the two parts played together normally. In connection with the possibility of *seeing* and *hearing* at the same time, these undeniable complex rhythms become easily readable from the first projection . . ." (Reviewer's translation.)

This important article contains a series of elucidating stills.

G. KUBIK.

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